

Substantial Evidence of Conspiracy Ignored by the Warren Commission

—Part 2

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"A Draft Brief for Reopening the Investigation into the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy: We have framed the arguments in 'brief' form to overcome the threshold barrier to consideration of the issues . . . posed by the great volume of conflicting writings and evidence."

Outline

Part 1 (June 1975)

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I. The Implausibility of the Single Bullet Theory ... (continued)

If it is accepted (as the Warren Commission did) that the bullet which entered Kennedy's back, exited from his throat and then entered Connally's back, the angles of the trajectories need to be examined. Cyril Wecht has done so and concludes:

"It should also be pointed out that the indicated pathways of these wounds are in considerable disagreement with the calculated trajectories from the postulated firing position of the assassin. The supposed assassin's site looked down on the car at an angle which varied from 22 to 20 degrees in the vertical plane and from 12 to about 8 degrees (right to left) in the horizontal plane, during the time interval over which these wounds might have been inflicted. The slope of the street, about 3 degrees, might perhaps be deducted from the vertical angle if we assume that the men's seating posture was determined by the slope of the car rather than their own sense of balance. (The Warren Commission made this correction although it is open to some question.) However, the vertical angle through the President's back/neck wound measures only about 11½ degrees, while that through the Governor's chest is larger, namely about 20 degrees. While these angular measurements are subject to error of a few degrees either way, the discrepancies seem too large to explain away in this fashion."

The original autopsy fact sheet places the President's neck wound in his back at a position below the neck wound in the front. Though said later to

have been an incorrectly low, rough estimation of the wound, it does line up with the holes in the President's coat and shirt./21/ The response that the President's coat and shirt were "bunched up" in the back, thus accounting for the low clothing holes in light of a high wound, as conclusively disproven by a glance at Willis slide #5./22/

5. The character of the wound in the front of the President's neck establishes that a pristine bullet did not exit there as postulated by the single bullet theory.

The bullet wound in the President's throat, described later as viewed prior to the tracheotomy incision, was "very small ... 3 to 5 mm."/23/ Dr. Cyril Wecht has said that he finds a wound of that size "... very, very hard to buy as an exit wound for a bullet which would have entered the back."/24/

An experiment done for the Warren Commission by Dr. Alfred G. Olivier of the Army's Edgewood Arsenal was done to simulate the wound through the President's neck. Three 6.5 millimeter bullets were fired through 14 centimeters of goat meat held between goat skins and shirt and jacket cloth./25/ The bullet entry wounds are the same size as the wound in the President's back, but the smallest exit hole was 10 mm., compared to the 3-5 mm. throat wound/26/ in President Kennedy.

6. The neutron activation analysis done on the bullet fragments found in Connally's wrist could not identify them with the bullet said to have wounded the President.

J. Edgar Hoover's letter of July 8, 1964 to the Warren Commission reports the results of the neutron activation analysis — that the metal fragments from Connally's wrist could not be identified as having come from the bullet which wounded the President./27/ The extensive studying of the (as yet unreleased) raw data could determine whether these test results prove the single bullet theory incorrect.

See Set B of Footnotes.

II. Double Head Shots

A. There is strong evidence to indicate that the President's head was hit by two shots in rapid succession, one from the front and the other from the rear.

1. The motion of the President's head tends to indicate that there were two shots.

Between frames 312-313 of the Zapruder film the President's head is seen to move forward at a rate

of 69.6 feet/second. Beginning at frame 313 the head moves violently backward and to the left until it bounces off the back seat at frame 321. Its speed backwards is 100.3 feet/second. This all occurs in 1/18 of a second.

This motion is extremely rapid and analysis of the film shows that it was not caused by acceleration of the car, as none of the occupants were thrown off balance at that time. Secret Service agent Clint Hill testified that he was thrown off balance by the acceleration of the car, yet he did not reach the car until frame 368 which is 3 seconds after the head shots.

The motion cannot be explained as a neuromuscular reaction. The startled response takes place over an interval of 40-200 milliseconds. The time required for the head to move forward is 83 milliseconds. The change in direction of Kennedy's head observed in the film occurs in 56 milliseconds, much too fast for a neurospasm.

Similarly, with a neuromuscular reaction we would expect the head to keep accelerating, however, in this case the velocity remained constant. Also, since the motor strip (pre-central gyrus) was blown out by the entering bullet, the likelihood of any muscular reaction is considerably diminished./1/ The Warren Commission chose to completely disregard this backward head motion.

2. The location of brain matter after the shots supports the double shot theory.

Governor and Mrs. Connally were covered with brain matter which would support a shot from the rear. However, a large amount of brain debris splattered on the left rear of the presidential car and also on the uniforms and windshields of the two motorcyclists who were riding 6 to 8 feet to the left rear of the President's car. One officer testified that the splattering was with such force that he at first thought that he had been struck.

A piece of skull bone was found in the street by an observer approximately 25 feet from where the President was shot. It was identified by Dr. A. B. Cairns, chief pathologist at Methodist Hospital as being from the occipital (rear) region of the skull. A bullet fired from the rear would have great difficulty causing this effect, but one fired from the front could easily explain it./2/

3. Doctors at Parkland Hospital described the President's head wounds in a manner consistent with the double shot theory.

In addition to the massive wound to the right temple, the Parkland doctors described a large wound in the occipital region with brain matter protruding from it. This tends to corroborate the belief that one of the head shots came from the front.

The Bethesda doctors give the picture of a shot entering the rear of the President's head and causing the massive damage to the temple region./3/

See Set C of Footnotes.

III. Did Oswald Do All the Shooting?

A. It is a widely accepted misconception that Lee Harvey Oswald was an expert rifleman, and that the shots from the Depository window were "easy."

Oswald's Marine Corps shooting scores indicate that he was not an expert rifleman. His last shooting score was taken in May of 1959 when Oswald scored

191 points. This performance barely qualified him for "marksman", the lowest title given out by the Marine Corps. Lt. Col. A. C. Folsom testified before the commission that Oswald's ability as evidenced by his score was that of a "rather poor shot."/1/

Complicating Oswald's rather mediocre shooting skill was the alleged assassination weapon itself, the Italian Manlicher-Caracano. The Caracano was a very cheap rifle, retailing for only \$12.78. It had a reputation for being a "humanitarian" weapon, a poor choice for any assassin./2/ The maladjusted scope on the rifle sent bullets flying high and off to the right./3/ Its difficult bolt made rapid firing very difficult. In addition, Oswald's Caracano had an eccentric trigger and a disintegrating firing pin./4/

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Attende — Continued from page 6

The Fight Against United States Aggression in Chile

Through you we address the people of the United States. We wish to take this opportunity to thank you for your efforts to unmask the aggression being waged against the Chilean people. We would like to express, in a very special way, our recognition of the efforts of those fine North Americans who have demonstrated their convictions in effective and moral solidarity with the victims of the tyranny. We applaud the initiatives of those distinguished political leaders who reject the announced visit to Chile by Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger. His visit not only signifies support to the Junta, but also serves to legitimize a regime which violates all human rights.

In a responsible manner we would also like to offer the warning that when fascism is flushed from our country, the Chilean people will disown and reject absolutely whatever accords, whatever pacts, whatever treaties agreed to by the military Junta, with whatever State or international organism.

Finally, it is our duty to appeal to the conscience of the North American people to prevent the continued support of your government for the most bloody regime that has been known in the history of Latin America: the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

The North American people cannot continue as accomplices in a policy contrary to their own best interests. Consequently, the demand must resound for the suspension of all military aid to the Junta, suspension of all the credits, suspension of any renegotiation of the external debt, and for the defense of Human Rights in Chile. For this reason we applaud the action of the US Congress towards terminating US military aid to the military Junta until Human Rights are restored.

Confronting this tangible danger of fascism, the so-called silent majority must convert itself to an active, thundering majority for democracy.

Pablo Neruda wrote the following lines:

"Let the rail-splitter awake.
You are vast and beautiful North America,
Your origin is humble like a washerwoman's
Beside your rivers, white,
Shaped in the unknown.
It is your peace of honeycomb that is most sweet.
It is your peace that we love, not your mask.
Your warrior's face is not handsome."

The fight against fascism in Chile is a fight against the dangers of fascism all over the world. That is why we can say, with all certainty and conviction: Venceremos - We shall overcome. □

Some of the Commission's difficulties regarding Oswald's rifle capability and his weapon's effectiveness might have been allayed had it been determined that Oswald had been practicing with the Manlicher-Caracano shortly before the assassination. The Commission was unable to document a single instance of Oswald practicing with his Manlicher-Caracano despite an extensive effort to do so./5/

But even given an excellent rifle and a superb marksman, Oswald's alleged feat of shooting is remarkable. He fired three shots from a bolt action rifle (which he had to load and unload twice) in a short span of 4.6-5.6 seconds. He was shooting at a target moving down an incline, from 60 feet up and 180 to 265 feet away. He had only .8 seconds to aim for his first shot and yet he managed to land two accurate hits, the last one causing the President's fatal head wound.

The Commission endeavored to determine if Oswald was capable of such a performance. The Commission's rifle tests were so different from the actual conditions Oswald encountered, that any of their conclusions are open to serious question. The Commission's rifleman was shooting at stationary targets instead of moving ones; they were firing from 30 feet up instead of Oswald's 60; they took as much time as they wanted for the first shot while the assassin had less than one second to aim for his; and even more remarkable they corrected the defective sight of Oswald's Caracano by mounting the rifle with metal shims. Furthermore the Commission employed "master" riflemen for the test, experts in firearms some four classes above Oswald's shooting ability.

Even under these more favorable circumstances, the Commission's test only served to prove how difficult Oswald's alleged feat really was. Only one of the three "master" riflemen, (with the stationary targets, corrected sight, reduced distance and added firing time for the first shot) managed to duplicate Oswald's ability.

B. The psychological stress evaluation indicates that Oswald was telling the truth when he said that he did not kill the President.

The Psychological Stress Evaluator (P.S.E.) was developed in the early 1970's as an auxiliary component to the polygraph which is designed to determine the authenticity of a suspect's testimony. It was later discovered by its inventors, Alan D. Bell, Jr. and Charles R. McQuiston (former lieutenant colonel in army intelligence), that the P.S.E. evaluated authenticity accurately enough to be used independently of the polygraph./9/ Other polygraph experts have come to the same conclusion and the P.S.E. is now growing to be a respectable device in criminological circles./10/

In 1972 George O'Toole processed tape recordings of Lee Harvey Oswald's statements to reporters through the P.S.E. His results were interesting: the P.S.E. indicated that Oswald was telling the truth when he said that he had not killed the President./11/ Mr. O'Toole's results brought criticism from experts who learned of his project; however, after processing the tapes themselves, the experts had to agree with his conclusions./12/ For example, L. H. "Rusty" Hitchcock, a former army intelligence agent and one of the most experienced polygraph examiners in the country, sent a supportive letter to Mr. O'Toole after analyzing the appropriate material./13/

See Set D of Footnotes.

IV. The Autopsy of President Kennedy Raises Doubt as to the Warren Commission Findings

The autopsy of President Kennedy at Bethesda Naval Hospital was very incomplete and vague in its findings.

1. The autopsy team was mostly military and had had limited forensic experience at the time. No civilian forensic pathologist was present.

2. The positions of the wounds were determined by faulty measuring methods.

3. The wound to the anterior neck was not recognized and dissected because of the tracheotomy that had been performed in Dallas. This wound was only discovered the following day during a conversation with the Dallas physician who attended Kennedy at Parkland.

4. The back wound was not dissected or tracked under military orders.

5. Coronal sections through the fixed brain were not made, although this is a routine procedure in cases of gunshot wounds of the head in order to track the pathway of a bullet or bullet fragment.

6. As a result, the autopsy was unable to provide detailed analysis of the wounds to help investigators in locating the assassin's positions./1/

7. See also autopsy analysis of trajectories in Single Bullet Theory — Argument I, page 1.

V. The Warren Commission Inadequately Investigated the Movements and Actions of Jack Ruby

The Commission waited six months before interviewing the assassin of Oswald, indicating a pre-dilection to accept the lone assassin theory before all the facts were in. Had the Commission been interested in thoroughly investigating the possibility of a conspiracy, its first witness would have been Jack Ruby, a man with troubling connections with the underworld and long time croney of many members of the Dallas Police force.

Testimony by several reliable witnesses bring the Commission's timetable of Ruby's movements into serious question. The Commission claims that Jack Ruby was not in Parkland Hospital shortly after the assassination, in the face of unequivocal testimony by disinterested and respectable witnesses. Seth Kantor, a member of the White House press corps reported in the Scripps-Howard Alliance newspaper on Monday, Nov. 25, that he had met Jack Ruby at Parkland Hospital about an hour after the assassination. As Kantor testified before the Warren Commission, "I was indelibly sure at the time and have continued to be so that the man who stopped me and with whom I talked was Jack Ruby. I feel strongly about it, because I had known Jack Ruby and he did call me by my first name. ..."/1/

See Set E of Footnotes.

For the Commission to accept Kantor's credible testimony, they would have to admit they were unsure of Ruby's movements during a critical period following the assassination. Instead they chose to accept the testimony of a convicted murderer over that of a respected member of the White House corps.

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